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ABSTRACT

This case study focuses on a deaf education program for elementary students. Four deaf classes categorized as Kindergarten, Primary I (paralleling first grade), Primary II (second and third grades), and Elementary (fourth, fifth, and sixth grades) are described, and one student from each of the classes is focused upon to illustrate the program's effectiveness. Descriptions of classroom interactions are provided, as well as comments from the teachers. Attitudes of regular class teachers largely support mainstreaming as an enrichment of the regular program. Comments of the principal and of deaf education teachers are also offered, and some difficulties in communication among parents and school personnel and BOCES (Board of Cooperative Educational Services) administrators and teachers are noted. The importance of inservice training for regular class teachers is emphasized. (CL)

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The Deaf Education Program In Sherwood Elementary School

Carol Berrigan

EC 17 1312

History of the Program

In September, 1974, the BOCES (Board of Cooperative Educational Services) Deaf Education Program began at Sherwood Elementary School, West Iroquois School District, Eastport, New York. Parents of deaf students, with the help of advocates, organized to create a local educational alternative for profoundly deaf children. Up to that point, the only option for these children were residential schools considering the distance from the Central City area. Several parents, some of whom were members of the task force created for seeking a local alternative, lived in the West Iroquois School District and approached the school district administrators. Finding them receptive, the parents worked through BOCES, whose representatives also became part of the task force. BOCES personnel formally requested to rent space from the district. They were welcomed.

The district began to prepare for the deaf education program. Sign language classes, as well as classes on nature and needs of the deaf were offered for faculty and hearing students at Sherwood. Among the participants of these classes were the Sherwood principal and assistant superintendent of the district.

Description of Sherwood School

The West Iroquois School District is west of Central City in a suburb which mushroomed after World War II. The typical home is a modest Cape Cod dwelling built in a small lot, twenty to thirty years ago. Sociologically, the neighborhood is lower middle to middle class.

Sherwood School consists of two connecting buildings, one built in 1962, the other in 1968. The original building is a sprawling one

story structure and contains the primary classes (K-3), both regular and deaf, also the principal's office, gymnasium, cafeteria, and smaller rooms for speech therapy and counseling. To provide needed space for the burgeoning child population, the school doubled its size with a two story addition which is connected to the original building by wide corridors and contains the upper grades (including one deaf class) and the library. The school is situated on a long, curving drive, nestled in fields, and a quarter mile from the main thoroughfare.

Currently, there are 760 students, kindergarten through sixth grade, 32 of whom are deaf and in the BOCES program. The staff numbers 64, 14 of whom comprise the BOCES deaf education program. All the BOCES staff are women. The regular Sherwood staff are predominantly women. The principal is a man and there are eight men teachers on the fifth and sixth grade levels, as well as one man physical education teacher.

BOCES Deaf Education Staff

There are four BOCES classes for deaf students at Sherwood. In addition to the certified deaf education teacher, each class has an interpretutor whose primary functions are those of a teacher's aide within the deaf classroom, and as an interpretutor for individual deaf students when they are mainstreamed in regular classes. The auxilary BOCES staff includes three speech pathologists and one part time counselor. The BOCES deaf education coordinator is at Sherwood one day a week and at the junior and senior high schools on the other days. The supervisor of special education of BOCES visits the program periodically, twice in the three months I observed at the school.

The Four Deaf Classes

The four deaf classes are categorized as Kindergarten, Primary I (paralleling regular first grade), Primary II (second and third grades), and Elementary (fourth, fifth, sixth grades). The class sizes number five to eleven students. "Total communication" is the vehicle for language used in the entire program. By "total communication" is meant signing, finger spelling, oral language, lip reading, and body language, that is, all possible modes of communication.

Students are referred to the program by the Committee on the Handicapped of their home district. The tuition for each child, paid by the home district, is $9,198.

The classrooms, spacious and light with one long window wall, are identical to the regular classrooms. For the three primary classes, located in the original building, there is a lavatory between rooms, as well as connecting doors. The classroom space for five deaf students is identical to that for regular classes of twenty five students.

Kindergarten

There are five students in this class. One is mainstreamed in the regular kindergarten for the entire afternoon. All students receive daily individual sessions with the speech pathologist. The classroom is womb-like, sheltering the five students and their teacher. The room has attractive and lively decorations including a large playhouse, a gymnastic set, and a play store. The teacher is competent, caring, and very much in control. She conscientiously uses oral language while she signs and demands of her students that they use oral language simultaneously with their signing. The instruction is typical of regular kindergarten

classes. The first period of the morning includes attendance, notations on the calendar, comments on the season and the weather, special events such as holidays and birthdays, and "show-and-tell". This is also the time for students to share their notebooks. Each student has a notebook which goes home at night with a note from the teacher, and returns in the morning with a note from the parents. It is used to bridge the gap between home and school and as a stimulator for conversation.

Primary I

In this class of six students, all are mainstreamed for physical education and two are mainstreamed for math. The morning routine is the same as in a regular first grade, that is, it includes attendance, calendar time, and individual anecdotes. The teacher uses oral language as she signs. She encourages the students to interact, to share an experience with each other.

The large classroom with its luxurious space is divided into areas of different emphases: language arts, math, arts and crafts.

Primary II

The ten students of this class (paralleling regular second and third grades) fall in the age range of eight to eleven years. The younger students are bright, capable, and academically successful. The older ones are having difficulty academically and become very distracted. Chronological peers of the older students who are more academically adept have passed on to the elementary class, which is located in the two-story wing. The teacher and the interpretutor have small groups of two or three students for reading and language arts, while others are engaged in independent study. All the students are mainstreamed in phys ed, art and music classes. Two of the groups are mainstreamed in second grade math. One student is fully mainstreamed, that is, all his classes are in regular classrooms.

He is moderate to severely hearing impaired and his school district referred him to the BOCES program in order for him to receive daily speech therapy.

Elementary

There are eleven students, ages ten to twelve, in this group. The teacher is relaxed, competent, and positive. The spacious room is a potpourri of maps, plants, charts of the human body, bookshelf dividers, and a large Victorian couch facing the windows. All students are mainstreamed in at least two regular classes: phys ed, art, math, social studies, and science. The students have individual daily schedules and enter and exit with efficiency and a sense of purpose. The teacher has three reading groups. One of the older students is in the slowest reading group. He came from a residential school for the deaf where finger spelling is the accepted mode of communication. He is very bright but has considerable difficulty in academic subjects. Total communication which is used in the BOCES program is helping him sharpen his academic skills.

Student Focus

A strategy used to assess mainstreaming of deaf students in regular classes was to focus on one student from each of the four deaf classes. I discussed the choice of student from each class with the teacher. "Typical" can be very arbitrarily defined. However, I attempted to find persons who were having a comfortable degree of success in regular classes but who were not the stellar achievers. The parents of the four students were notified. I readily agreed to cease observing a student who was becoming upset by my presence. In fact, no student did. All teachers wore microphones around their necks when instructing deaf students.

Each deaf student wears a phonic ear in the form of a small box that is strapped over the chest to amplify sound.

Ellen

Ellen attends the deaf kindergarten all morning and is mainstreamed all afternoon in the regular kindergarten. Mrs. M., the regular kindergarten teacher, noticed that Ellen wasn't comprehending all the instructions. Arrangements were made for the interpretutor to come into the regular kindergarten for the first half-hour of the afternoon to interpret for Ellen. It is at this time that Mrs. M. does her formal instruction. Ellen enjoys her afternoon class, volunteers answers to the teacher's questions to the class, and interacts with her classmates. As the class breaks up, the students sit at three tables. Mrs. M. speaks directly to Ellen. Ellen responds orally and with no difficulty. The boys on either side of her also talk to her in a normal tone and spontaneous conversation follows. However, when the regular teacher's aide comes to Ellen's side to comment on Ellen's work, the aide mouths her words with exaggeration, but making no sound, and gestures dramatically. This aide is not really seeing Ellen as an individual who happens to have some hearing impairment, but at the same time makes good use of her residual hearing; this aide has let deafness define Ellen.

In response to a question on Ellen's interaction in the classroom, Mrs. M. comments:

> Ellen needs a little more. She doesn't hear well. It takes her a little longer, but the interpretutor has made a big difference for Ellen. Ellen has not held the class up. The class is absolutely no different with her here. As a matter of fact, its been a wonderful experience for the other students. The parents of some hearing students expressed concern in the beginning that the class might be slowed down, but no longer.

Judy

Judy is six and is mainstreamed for math in a regular first grade. She is in Primary I of the Deaf Education Program. The teacher of the regular first grade is Mrs. S., a very gentle, loving, and competent instructor. For math lessons, Mrs. S. groups the desks in clusters of four. The other three students in Judy's cluster learned basic signs in order to be able to communicate with Judy. The interpretutor goes to math classes with Judy four of the five days and assists not only Judy, but others who may need help.

Responding to my question concerning any changes in her classroom due to the presence of a deaf student, Mrs. S. states:

> Academically, there was no change. Socially, yes. There was preparation for my class on deafness. Judy's teacher came in and talked about deafness. Some teachers are afraid to mainstream, but they don't know how easy it is. Some teachers fear that regular students will be denied. That's not so. The class is a richer experience.

Matthew and George

Mainstreamed in a regular second grade math class are Matthew, 8 years old, and George, 7 years old. Their deaf class is Primary II. The interpretutor goes with them every day. They have their own desks and feel very much a part of this regular math class. The second grade teacher, Mrs. H., is warm, friendly, and has an easy rapport with her students. Mrs. H. cheerfully puts the microphone around her neck. Matthew and George sit next to each other and in a cluster with two others. There is camaraderie between the two boys and the rest of the class. While students are doing individual work at their desks, they are helped by Mrs. H. The interpretutor helps the two deaf students, and hearing students as well.

Mrs. H. comments:

> Guess I was a little apprehensive at first but I've enjoyed the experience. Everyone benefits. The deaf kids are a part of this class.

Theresa

Theresa is in the Elementary deaf class, the oldest group. Twelve years old, she is mainstreamed in science, math, art, and phys ed. This is her last year at Sherwood. Next year she moves to the Junior High. In each of her mainstreamed classes, Theresa is joined by an interpretutor. Her science teacher, Mr. V., is friendly, affable, and has easy control in the classroom. There are twenty four hearing students in the class. The interpretutor stands about eight feet from Mr. V. and signs all his conversation as well as students' comments. The class is studying a unit on the human body. Theresa is completely absorbed and at one point volunteers an answer.

Mr. V. writes notes on the board, but sometimes he talks beyond the notes. The hearing students can write the extra notes, but Theresa is watching the interpretutor and there isn't time to write. An arrangement has been made whereby Theresa consults the notebooks of two students in the class to augment her own notes.

When asked about changes in his class due to the presence of a deaf student, Mr. V. responded:

> It's no different. Parents were afraid their kids would suffer. Nobody has suffered. The first few days the kids were distracted by the interpretutor signing in front of the room. After that they got used to it and they don't even notice it now. It's a good experience for everyone to have handicapped kids mainstreamed. Teachers think it's going to be tough or disruptive. All they have to do is try it.

Views of Teachers on Mainstreaming

The deaf education teachers and the regular education teachers had differing views on mainstreaming. I found a separateness between the two groups which extended even to the teachers' lunch room where they sat at separate tables on the eight occasions I ate there. On an individual basis, there were friendly exchanges between a deaf education teacher and a regular education teacher. But even these were at best secondary relationships as compared to the primary relationships of teachers and staff within each program.

In my interview with the principal at the end of my observations at the school, he commented:

> It would be good to have more informal contact with deaf ed and my teachers. Through informal ways I think there would be better mainstreaming.
>
> Observer:
>
> What do you mean by 'informal'?
>
> I mean it doesn't have to be some formal inservice. Informal - day to day contacts - would break down barriers between deafness and my teachers, when individuals come together. The important thing is how they interrelate.

And from a deaf education teacher:

> We're guests in the school. We're a different program. We're BOCES. We have separate workshops frequently. Sometimes others are resentful when we have days off. The school is cliquey. We stand apart.

Regular Education Teachers

At Sherwood, mainstreaming in the academic areas is completely voluntary. The regular classroom teachers make known to the deaf education teachers their willingness to include a deaf student in their classes. Currently there are ten classroom teachers who are mainstreaming deaf students. However, from the beginning of the BOCES program, teachers in

such special areas as art, and physical education, were expected to mainstream deaf students. This stirred resentment among some of the special area teachers as evidenced in the following remarks:

> I'm pretty bitter about how the deaf kids were dumped on us. We were told we HAD to have THEM in our classes. After a couple years of this the special area teachers revolted. We demanded some orientation, some instruction on how to teach the deaf. We put our foot down. No more deaf kids in our classes until we had some preparation.

And from another of the special area teachers:

> Three years ago the other phys ed teacher, the art teacher and myself felt we weren't doing things right. Everybody was suffering. Deaf kids and normal kids. We said no more mainstreaming until we got some help, some instruction, some ideas on how to deal with deaf kids. They set up a course for us. Right here at the school. Somebody came from S.U. and team-taught the course with the supervisor of deaf ed here. Boy, it was great! We got so much out of it. Part of the course was to visit three schools for the deaf - Hempstead, Levittown, and Oceanside. Wow! We learned something there. We found that we could do much better in our phys ed classes for the deaf kids. Because we were expecting so much from the kids, we got it. We observed tennis instruction. Two instructors to eight kids. High School. The kids weren't even holding the racquet right. Now with that ratio of kids to teachers you could at least expect the right hold on a tennis racquet. Then they were playing very simple games with the kids. Talking down to them. Expecting little. All children grow. But they grow much more slowly if you're expecting little. The one thing I saw that was really good was swimming. It was one to one and the kids were doing great. I felt that the gym classes were limited because they were dealing with the same type kids. If you deal with normal kids, when you get kids with problems, you pull them up by their bootstraps. Now I got deaf kids who come out for after-school gym club. They're like any other kid.

By far the most negative reaction I heard during my visits at Sherwood was from another of the phys ed teachers. I was observing a hockey game among sixth graders during a phys ed class where three deaf students are mainstreamed. An interpretutor stood on the sidelines and signed the teacher's instructions, as well as teammates' comments.

First, the teacher selected two captains who lined up the teams alternately. Sam and Billy, deaf students, were among the first selected and started the game on first string. Both boys are scrappy and competent players, and enjoyed the game. The third deaf student, Theresa, is not as adept, and played second string. She was teased by Billy who playfully signed to her in the midst of the din, "you're blind," then pantomimed an old person leaning on a cane. It was all done in good humor and completely missed by the teacher. There was great enthusiasm and a good spirit. I observed that all three deaf students were accepted and simply were part of the class. I commented on this to the teacher who retorted:

> The deaf kids stick together. There's no natural mainstreaming. The hearing kids ignore them.

However, I found from other staff members that the negativeness of the teacher was typical of her reactions to hearing as well as deaf students and there was conjecturing that this could be attributed to a personal crisis in her life. She did not appear to influence other staff because the usual reaction from the regular education staff to mainstreaming indicated not only an acceptance but a belief that it was an enrichment of their classes. The comments from a regular ed first grade teacher echo those sentiments:

> Prior to Judy (a deaf student) entering my class, her deaf ed teacher came in and talked to the class about deafness. This brought a whole new dimension to my normal students' ordinary life. Judy's presence has given the class vitality.

From the music teacher:

> There's no magic in teaching the deaf kids. They can enjoy and learn music in their own way. Of course, if you were to tell any music teacher to teach deaf kids they would probably be horrified. But I practice-taught in this school three years ago and found it very enjoyable. Then I was lucky there was an opening and I've taught here two years now.

From the art teacher, in whose class there was spontaneity and a spirit of freedom among the students:

> The deaf kids fit right in. They're kids like all kids. Why, I don't need an interpretutor for this class. We (three deaf students and teacher) don't need a third party in order to communicate.

One of the deaf students in the art class has difficulty with the academic curriculum. However, he is very creative and talented. He is more alive in this class than I have seen him elsewhere. He is not only accepted but cited for his artistic ability by teacher and students alike.

From one of the phys ed teachers:

> The deaf kids have difficulties with concepts. Figurative language is almost impossible. It is terribly difficult for the deaf to attach other interpretations to a word. For example: drive (drive car, drive: ambition, etc.). Mainstreaming has forced deaf kids to go at a faster pace than you would get in a self-contained school.
>
> Some deaf kids are selfish because they've been indulged by their parents. For example, they want to be always first in line, and here they had to learn to share. Here they've learned the social graces as well as academics. They became more mature, we did them a favor by not giving them their way.
>
> The first year we had a square dancing unit as part of phys ed. We wondered: Could the deaf kids do it? This would depend on some assistance from the hearing world. The phys ed teacher worked out the calls with an interpreter. The deaf kids loved it and did excellently.

Noting that some teachers have not volunteered to take a deaf student in their classes, I asked the principal if there was a certain type of instructor willing to mainstream deaf students. He responded:

> No. There are no special characteristics in people or in teaching styles. Well, maybe the personality of individuals has something to do with it. Maybe there is a special personality to the individual who is willing to mainstream. It has got to be a person who will share, who will talk, who will empathize.

Deaf Education Teacher

The deaf education teachers were unanimous in citing academic achievement as the most important criterion for mainstreaming deaf students. The degree of deafness or the facility in oral speech were not major issues in the projected success of a mainstreamed student.

One deaf education teacher discussed a student:

> George is profoundly deaf and not oral, but is super bright. He is my youngest student and knows the world and the countries of the world. He has a developed sense of geography. Right now he goes to a regular math class, but he could be fully integrated.

The deaf ed teachers have a sense of accomplishment when their students can be mainstreamed in a regular classroom for at least one subject. But these deaf students are THEIRS. And deaf education has "specialness." I recorded the following remarks from discussions with deaf education teachers:

> If I were a regular classroom teacher not qualified to teach deaf kids, I would sure be resentful if one were dumped in my class.
>
> I see my personal role in mainstreaming as taking as much off the regular teacher as possible. You have to make it as easy as possible.
>
> Regular teachers are not trained. I wouldn't do it if I weren't trained. Why, we've spent four years in special training.
>
> In the future, those teachers will have to have everyone in class-neurologically impaired, emotionally disturbed-with no support services. We don't force any of our own deaf kids on them.

Two of the staff had previously worked at the New York State School for the Deaf, Hempstead, New York.

> It was much easier to teach in Hempstead. The State School has tons of materials...All kinds of money...All kinds of resources...physical education, sensory education...audiologist,

psychologist, dance instructor for the deaf, etc. etc.. It was nice to have all those people in deaf ed to talk with. Everyone was skilled. I miss the camaraderie. A problem for the school for the deaf was that the staff loses sight of expectations for the deaf kids. Also the staff begins to take all the resources for granted and doesn't use them creatively. I think I do a better job teaching the deaf at Sherwood - because I was teaching in a deaf school.

Observer: If you had a deaf child, where would you send this child to school?

A residential deaf school. Except that I would move to the city where there was a residential school so my child could commute every day. The kids here at Sherwood don't have enough deafness surrounding them. Many kids here suffer because there is not enough for a deaf world. If this program were ideal, I would want it for my child.

Observer: How would this program be ideal?

If the School for Deaf were in Freeport and was near a school district where kids could go back and forth, they wouldn't have to suffer. Non-academic subjects would be shared. Kids would be integrated to some degree. The expectations in the deaf school would be heightened.

Observer: How would you describe the school at Hempstead?

I feel the atmosphere at Hempstead is better for deaf children. At Sherwood they only have each other, and that is a limited number. I see very little social integration. I think this may be damaging to the social development of deaf children.

Following are remarks of a teacher describing her six year old student who is mainstreamed the entire afternoon in a regular kindergarten:

She has normal or possibly a little above normal intelligence, is spirited, uses her residual hearing very well, and is oral. Her speech is excellent. When we mainstreamed her in the afternoon she wasn't doing very well. There is much language in the kindergarten. It's a good place to see how the kid will progress with mainstreaming. I sent the interpretutor for one half hour every day to interpret the information and procedures which the kindergarten teacher gives in the first half hour of her class. Now my student is functioning 100% and not her previous 60%.

Observer: The student now functions at 100% with just a half hour of service from the interpretutor! What do you envision as the ideal for this student's education?

She should stay in the deaf ed program right through high school so she'll get every opportunity to absorb all the information she can.

The Administration

A symbol of this school's commitment to deaf education is the large poster of the fingerspelling alphabet that greets a visitor walking into the administrative offices. When I commented on the poster to the principal, he responded:

You'd be amazed at how many kids, parents, and visitors begin practicing fingerspelling while they're waiting.

Sherwood Principal

The principal laments the separateness of the two programs and sees this separation intensifying with the most recent BOCES administrative personnel:

Each year my involvement has been less and less. BOCES takes increasingly more responsibility for the administration. I wish there were more sharing. The BOCES teachers have different schedules for holidays, vacations, etc.. Sometimes our teachers are resentful that BOCES teachers not only get our holidays because the school is closed but others as well. The BOCES program closes one week before ours does in June. So they have the luxury of finishing their reports, doing IEP's, and cleaning their rooms while our teachers are still teaching all day.

Almost exclusively the BOCES supervisor does the decision making for the program. When the program first began there was more sharing and openness. Now there is more, if not complete, domination by BOCES. They share very little with us. We are really ignored as far as decision making is concerned.

In response to a question about inservice for the regular classroom teachers on educating deaf students, the principal reported:

In the beginning of the program we had inservice workshops on deafness, working very cooperatively with the BOCES personnel. In the last two years there has been none. And no one on my staff has expressed a need for inservice to me. My total staff is not involved. Some feel uncomfortable with deaf kids and choose not to be involved. Some also feel uncomfortable about having another adult--the interpretutor--in their room while they're teaching. Also there are no special funds to pay for good inservice workshops.

Observer: What could you see as further commitment on your part to the deaf education program?

First, providing release time for my non-mainstreaming teachers to observe the deaf ed classes and mainstreamed classes. Second, to identify and give public recognition to good examples of mainstreaming in the school. And third, to regularly visit the deaf ed classes myself.

Visitors come from all over to observe our program. And do you know what? Outsiders know more about our program than our own regular teachers. One other thing: I don't understand why some school districts pay BOCES to send some kids to this program when the kids are completely mainstreamed in our school. They should keep their kids in their local schools with maybe an itinerant teacher for consultation.

BOCES Administrators

Parents of deaf students in the program were extremely critical of the BOCES Special Education Director and the Deaf Education Supervisor to the extent that a letter-writing campaign to the BOCES Superintendent was organized to discourage the granting of tenure to the BOCES Special Education Director. However, the Director was tenured. The Director described the program:

We have a quality program. We are a vendor of services, not an institution. We must keep the program more vital and innovative than your average school district could. If a school district or combined school districts can give as good a program cheaper, then they deserve to do it. I'd like to see a voucher system. Have this go private and parents pay directly with vouchers. The pressure on us keeps the program vital.

> The original perspective of this program was an alternative to the state schools. In the cascade of services BOCES offers one option. BOCES offers self-contained classes as well as integrative classes. What we do not have are resource rooms. New York State law prohibits resource rooms by BOCES. We try to do something better for school districts without programs. We've got to have good programs to make it attractive for school districts to pay BOCES the money. We've got to do it not only better but also at a price that school districts couldn't do themselves. We can't do all things better. There are two school districts who found that kids did better in their local schools with an itinerant teacher.

The supervisor visits the Sherwood program one day a week. Sherwood was the first of three schools to have the deaf education program. (The other schools are Eastport Junior High and Westport Senior High.) For the two years that Sherwood was the only school, the supervisor was an integral part of the program five days a week. The first supervisor was a certified deaf education teacher as well as a speech pathologist. The present supervisor, a speech pathologist, has no background in deaf education.

The deaf education staff commented on the supervision of the Sherwood program:

> The supervisor is here only one day a week because she has other programs to supervise. She doesn't know the kids. She doesn't know the teachers.
>
> The school is less receptive now than it was in the beginning. We started small, with two teachers, the supervisor, and a teacher's aide. The supervisor was the speech therapist and she knew each student; she went to all the regular classrooms and did public relations work. She volunteered to go to classrooms and talk about deafness and went into many, many classes. She ran inservice training each Fall before classes began, for anyone who wanted to come. She taught sign classes and several teachers participated.
>
> The program is much bigger. When we started, the supervisor was not only an administrator but could sub for a teacher if one was sick, because she was also a certified deaf ed teacher. She did inservice and P.R. with regular teachers.
>
> All teachers don't know that they could use the interpretutor who goes with the deaf kid as an aide, a team teacher, a disciplinarian for other kids as well. The supervisor should go around and do P.R. work.

Personal Insights

Least Restrictive Environment

From the beginning, I have been somewhat familiar with the Deaf Education Program at Sherwood. The teachers in the past, as well as the current staff impress me as creative, competent, and caring. The program, begun as an alternative to residential schools, was a radical step at the time of its inception.

Comments from regular teachers who have mainstreamed have been uniformly positive about the experience. When asked why some of their colleagues avoid mainstreaming, their responses were:

> I think there is a lack of preparation for mainstreaming. Teachers are fearful. It has come too fast. Teachers are afraid of physically handicapped students because they fear failure. Some have refused because of fear. They don't know how easy it is. But teachers can find other students. I group my desks in clusters of four. The other three in my deaf student's cluster learned basic signs to help her. Some teachers fear that regular students will be denied.

Others, particularly the special area teachers, (art, phys ed, music) who have had all the deaf students and therefore more familiarity, stressed the "sameness in kids." Where no one of the regular ed teachers mentioned it, I observed a pattern of possessiveness among the deaf ed teachers, which, I believe is inhibitive to the deaf student's integration. Also, among the deaf ed teachers, is an attitude of "specialness" in their training that sets them apart.

Momentum has gathered, and more and more regular ed teachers are gaining enough confidence to accept disabled students. As one teacher said, "My kids learned more because of the deaf students. But this news hasn't got around yet."

Yet, the ultimate question is, "Can profoundly deaf students be mainstreamed in their neighborhood schools?" I began my observational visits to Sherwood pondering that question with great ambivalence. I now am no longer ambivalent. My answer is "yes".

In the Fall of 1980, the parents of a six year old deaf student in Primary I requested that their daughter attend her neighborhood school. (the family was featured in a recent newspaper article.) The mother was reported as saying:

> The family was satisfied at first with the 'deaf education' provided by BOCES staff at Sherwood. As time went on, we saw that our daughter needed more of a challenge. We felt that challenge would be offered if our daughter was able to attend classes with children with normal hearing. Unfortunately, the school personnel did not agree and so there was a hearing before the Committee on the Handicapped. A hearing officer was called in. He recommended that our daughter be placed in her neighborhood school with help from an interpretutor and resource teacher. This was rejected by the district because officials said there was no specialist for the deaf available and the district couldn't provide one for a single pupil. To this we say that the school district is paying to send our daughter to another district and the cost of hiring a resource teacher would be less.

The parents have been forced to sue their school district based on the violations of federal law which provides for an educational setting in "the least restrictive setting". They hope that this litigation "will benefit other parents who are faced with the same problems."

In recent weeks I had lunch with two women and their teenage daughters who are deaf. Both these parents were among the leaders who struggled for the creation of the deaf education program at Sherwood as an alternative to the residential schools which their daughters previously attended. They

were both very pleased with Sherwood and now their daughters are in high school. One of these mothers, both of whom militantly support the above mentioned parents who are suing their home school district, stated:

> If I knew then what I know now I would have insisted with my school district that my daughter go to her neighborhood school with her siblings and neighbors. She has very limited ties where we live. Her peers in the BOCES high school program all live many miles from each other which makes it difficult to socialize with her high school friends. It's too late for my daughter, but I strongly support the younger families.

Inservice Training for Regular Education Teachers

A common thread among the regular ed teachers was their stressing the necessity of inservice training on deaf education. The physical ed teacher stated, "We rebelled and refused to have deaf kids in our classes until they gave us some inservice."

Another teacher:

> I was among the first teachers to mainstream, and in the beginning we had a general meeting on sign language and deafness. This might be a good thing to do every year. I would say that the essential points to stress are (1) attitude of teachers, and (2) preparation of the hearing students.

From a special area teacher:

> I would say that attitude is the biggest factor. If you can open people's heads to seeing that kids are the same whether they're deaf, blind, or purple, it's half the battle. But we've got to keep plugging at our teachers. They're scared that they're going to look like failures. You've got to show them that these kids are not THOSE kids but OUR kids. This can't be one year on, one year off. There has got to be regular inservice.

Repeatedly, I found regular and deaf ed teachers using the expression, "There has got to be more P.R.". They felt strongly that teachers who were unfamiliar with deafness had to be coached, had to be informed, had to be encouraged, and had to meet deaf adults so they could imagine the potential of deaf students.

Finally, the words of one of the deaf ed teachers who I believe could be as effective in teaching her colleagues as she is in instructing her deaf students:

> I love teaching deaf kids. In them I find great imagination. It's almost as though their imaginations are more fertile because they're not encumbered by all the stimuli that hearing people have as a daily diet. I find that so often normal kids fit into the mold. They conform to the culture and as a citizen. Deaf kids don't have the mold. They have so much to teach the world.